

# PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE LAND SURVEYOR

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The rapidly changing technology of recent years has revolutionized the practice of land surveying and is molding Land Surveyors into highly specialized professionals. Higher educational requirements and adherence to regulated standards for our professional services have all contributed to the betterment of the profession. As Land Surveyors, we have long known that we are professional, but only recently have we come to recognize the necessity of presenting ourselves in a favourable manner in order to obtain the professional respect we deserve.

It has become increasingly apparent from our recent differences with a sister Association, that Land Surveyors lack credibility as professionals in the minds of others. Some of these other professionals have formed strong opinions of us, based upon hastily preconceived notions concerning our qualifications and capabilities.

Land Surveyors are suffering from this unfavourable image. In the eyes of many people, the stereotype surveyor is seen as the unkempt transitman standing beside an instrument, holding up traffic in the midst of highway construction. The personal appearance of some Land Surveyors

while dealing with clients and the business community may unknowingly perpetuate this image.

Personal appearance plays one of the greatest roles in the formation of first impressions. Persons with whom we come in contact will form their first opinions of us based on how they see us. Each of them will make decisions concerning our character, success, social position, trustworthiness, sophistication and education, based on our appearance. They are much more likely to deal in a professional manner with those who conform to their perceived image of a successful professional.

The dictionary defines image as being "a representation in the mind of how one perceives something to be." It has been stated by Dr. John MacLaughlin, that a professional is 70% substance and 30% image. Do Land Surveyors have the substance but lack the image? If such is the case, are we satisfied to be 70% professional?

Unless actually working in the field, the professional Land Surveyor should wear appropriate attire (dress shirt, tie and jacket). Let us shed the red checkered shirt, bush boots and plumb bob holstered on the belt image. Obviously, professional dress should be worn

when meeting with lawyers, engineers, developers and other clients. When in court, a business suit is a must, so why not when meeting with clients, government officials and other professionals? And when our picture is to be reproduced in the Nova Scotian Surveyor, or other professional publications, let us make the effort to supply a suitable photograph. Field clothes give the impression that a person is a technician, not an educated professional.

Let us consider the mental image that we might create in the eyes of a client, by some of our business practices. Transportation of the crew to and at the job site with a rusty old vehicle does not enhance one's image. Neither does having an office in a corner of the basement of one's home, especially if access is through the living quarters. A potential client is rarely impressed when a young child answers the business telephone.

There are numerous ways that Land Surveyors can display professionalism and help to change the attitude of the public. The business office should be well organized, neat and show pride in the land surveying profession. Certificates of qualification should be displayed in a prominent location. The

filing system should be tidy and orderly, and the whole atmosphere of the office should convey to the client the professional manner in which he may expect his job to be performed.

The Land Surveyor's advertising, stationery, business cards and survey plans create a picture in the eyes of the public of the type of individual doing business. Similarly, the promptness and courtesy we display in returning all telephone calls and correspondence, will demonstrate our attitude of concern for the well-being of each person with whom we come in contact. All of these factors indicate the degree of pride and enthusiasm we have for our profession.

As Land Surveyors, we have to learn to communicate better and more correctly. We must concentrate on cleaning up sloppy language, slang and incorrect grammar in our speech, and make every effort to eliminate spelling, punctuation and typographical errors from our written communications. Concern for proper use of our language should be applied to employee relations, client relations and public relations.

The way individual Land Surveyors interact with associates is extremely important to the way the entire profession is perceived. Disputes between surveyors which become widely publicized, immediately ruin a carefully cultivated image of the profession. When adjoining owners of a "bar cluster" dispute with their surveyors, it can become a very damaging public action. It is understandable that measurements are not absolute; what is not understandable is why surveyors do not communicate with one another before meeting in public. Collaboration with others is one of the most important arts we must learn as professionals.

Sharing information is an opportunity to display professionalism.

Cooperation with a fellow practitioner, by providing access to plans and field notes, is likely to produce a more confident solution to a problem and a better service to our clients. Many times, talking over a thorny situation with one of our peers will give a better insight on the subject and the end result will be a better decision.

Land Surveyors should seek opportunities to become involved in community organizations. Every calling has its requirements, but beyond these are the self-expression and extra effort that one can contribute, that will give that extra margin of service to the common good. Memberships in service clubs and participation in community affairs are an excellent way to network with others and present oneself as a professional.

The true professional has only one standard of workmanship - always and only the best. The true professional is not content to end his education on graduation or on attaining professional status. With the rapidly changing technology of these times, we must maintain our competency and continue to learn through work experience, continuing education programs, and participation in our professional organizations.

Not only has technology changed with the times, but so have the attitudes of society. Land Surveyors are working closer together and dealing more closely with the public. We are becoming more and more exposed to public scrutiny, so we must become more conscious of the way our actions portray ourselves. Human nature being what it is, if the image that we portray is seen to be unprofessional, then doubts will arise concerning our competence to perform professional services. The well dressed professional, however, will have less difficulty commanding professional fees and will be less apt to be asked to justify the tariff for services provided.

We now stand on the threshold of a new era in our profession; an era in which we will embrace a whole new philosophic concern in surveying - the geographic information system. In order to gain our rightful place as stewards of the land tenure system during this era, we must act as professionals and command respect as professionals.

Land Surveyors must come to realize that it is our responsibility to make changes happen. It is up to us, individually and collectively, to improve the way we are perceived. Part of the professional responsibility is the personal contribution we make along with others in the support and enhancement of the land surveying profession. So let us present ourselves with an attitude and an image which will command the respect of our fellow citizens. Let us take positive action to ensure that there is never a need for the public to even question our professionalism.

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